

## another face by GhostGrantaire

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** F/M, Pre-Relationship, at least for the ot3 because they're always my endgame

**Language:** English

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**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

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**Summary:**

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### Author's Note:

This came out of nowhere, but I have a lot of feelings about Steve continuing his redemption arc, especially with the Byers.

He'd never admit it, especially not to Jonathan, but Steve hated going to the Byers' house. He and Nancy had both been pretty wary of it after November, but Nancy had gotten over it with time, and now she looked comfortable there as if it was her own house.

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It wasn't who they were as people. Sure, Steve could see they were a bit odd, but that was mostly because he was used to dealing with suburban families with 2.5 kids and white picket fences who couldn't talk about anything but the weather and last night's episode of *Family Ties*. At least Joyce Byers knew how to hold a conversation without excusing herself to take a phone call or interrupting seven times to criticize your table manners. Sometimes she would get a bit too anxious about getting Steve lunch, even if he insisted he wasn't hungry, or she'd stare at Will for a bit too long and tear up, and Steve would have to pretend he didn't notice. But she was kind, and Steve didn't mind ignoring her eccentricities from time to time.

And sure, Will was a bit of a nerd when it came to Dungeons & Dragons, and sometimes he'd fade off in the middle of his sentence and look like he'd seen a ghost, but the little interaction they'd had showed the boy was also sweet and interesting and had the same quiet sense of humor as his brother did.

Steve wasn't sure when it'd happened, but Steve honestly, genuinely, and truly liked the Byers. And somehow that just made everything worse. Every time Will smiled at one of his terrible jokes or Joyce

offered to make him dinner, all he could remember was what he'd said last November.

*"The Byers are a disgrace to the entire--"* He was grateful that Jonathan had punched him when he did. He didn't know what he would've said next, and he really didn't care to. He'd done a lot of shitty things in his life (that much was obvious now), but that day had had some of his worst. (And his best, he had to admit, if hitting an inter-dimensional monster with a baseball bat wasn't some fever dream he still hadn't forgotten.)

But now, the Byers' friendliness and acceptance of him felt somehow aggressive, just a constant reminder of how far beneath them he really was.

Then there was the question that constantly poked the back of his brain. The small seed of doubt that maybe the only reason that Joyce Byers was so kind was that she didn't know she had a reason not to be.

She knew about the fight between him and Jonathan, that was certain. Steve was pretty sure Jonathan had told her, and even if he didn't, it wasn't hard to put the pieces together, what with Jonathan's arrest and bruised hand and the state of Steve's face after that day. But most of the town seemed to think it was about Nancy (and it had been, for Steve at least). While Jonathan knew what Steve used to be like and the things he'd said about his family, maybe Joyce didn't. And maybe if she knew, she'd hate him. And maybe Jonathan, who always held his mother in the highest regard, would realize what a mistake he'd made, and then Nancy would get it too. Steve would be alone, and he wasn't sure he'd be able to handle that.

He tried to never linger on those thoughts. The fear beneath them was too real, too close, and even if he had stopped being an asshole, he still had a reputation to uphold. But Jonathan and Nancy had forgiven him. They'd let him redeem himself, and now they were closer than ever. They'd become fixtures in his life, something to ground him when he dreamt of monsters or felt like punching Tommy in the face. He depended on them more than anybody else.

(He wondered if one day they might just need him as much as he

needed them.)

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It was movie night at the Byers'. The tradition had started within the Byers' family itself, and then stretched to include Mike and Nancy as time went on. Steve was pretty sure that his own involvement was a fluke. He'd been complaining one spring day after school about not having anything to do that night since his only two friends were busy, and Jonathan hadn't even looked up before saying "well you could always just come over too." Steve had shut up immediately before realizing he was serious. He hadn't missed a night since.

"Does everyone want ice cream?" Joyce asked from the kitchen, and Steve stopped wrestling Jonathan for the TV remote and looked up with a grin. Her answer was met with a chorus of five loud voices yelling "yes!".

"I'll help, Ms. B!" Steve exclaimed, getting to his feet. He fixed Nancy and Jonathan with a serious look. "Don't vote on the movie without me."

Once in the kitchen, he pulled out the tub of ice cream from the freezer as Joyce grabbed the bowls. When he handed it to her, she smiled at him, and that familiar stab of guilt hit his chest. He turned away, unable to look at it any longer.

"Hey, Mrs. Byers--" he suddenly spoke up, against all better judgment.

"Joyce," Jonathan's mother cut in automatically, just like she always did, and Steve gave a half-hearted smile.

"Joyce," he amended. His heart was beating rapidly, a clear sign to pull back now before he crossed a line, but he was never that great at listening to his instincts. "Um, I was just wondering... I mean, did Jonathan ever tell you what I did? When I... that day that..."

He faded off, not sure how to continued. *When I punched your son and called you a screw up even though I'm the screw up? Yeah, sorry about that.* He didn't know why he insisted on pulling this cord. He

should've just left it alone, but he couldn't help himself. For some godforsaken reason, he needed to know the answer.

Joyce paused in her task, glancing at him and holding his gaze. Her brows were drawn in confusion, lips twisted down. She set down the spoon she was scooping with. "Are you talking about the monster? Of course I know about that. Jonathan said you saved his life."

Something in Steve sunk, and he turned back to the sandwiches. She didn't know, she hadn't forgiven him. She just thought he was some unsung hero who'd saved the day, just in the nick of time. "Uh, yeah, the monster. I just didn't know, I guess."

They worked at the dessert together for several moments, taking turns scooping the ice cream, as they listened to the sound of Will, Mike, Jonathan, and Nancy bicker over which film. When they'd finished, Steve grabbed a bowl in each hand and balanced a third in his arms. He began to make his way out into the living room when Joyce spoke up again.

"You know, Steve," she said as he turned to look at her. There was something curious about her smile, but her eyes were as kind as ever. She reached out and squeezed his shoulder gently. "Everybody makes mistakes. Nobody's perfect."

She smiled at him once more before grabbing the remaining bowls of ice cream and making her way to the rest of the party. Steve stared after her, lips parted in surprise. He stayed frozen until Nancy yelled at him from the living room to hurry up with the ice cream.

Ten minutes later, they were all sitting in front of the television, having decided to watch E.T., even though everyone had seen it. Joyce and Nancy sat on the couch, and Steve in the armchair. Jonathan, Mike, and Will stretched out on the floor, the younger boys sprawled on the stomach, while Jonathan was sitting up. Steve watched him lean his head back against Nancy's leg and they shared a small smile that made Steve's heart clench.

*"Nobody's perfect,"* her voice rang out in his head. He didn't doubt that Joyce Byers was a really smart lady, and she was probably right about a lot of things, but he knew without a doubt she'd been wrong.

*Some people are.*

**Author's Note:**

Title comes from the Belle & Sebastian song, There's Too Much Love:

*"You say I've got another face,  
that's not a fault of mine these days,  
I'm brutal, honest, and afraid of you"*